

# SIREN LACERTINA.



## CHARACTER GENERICUS.

*Corpus* bipedum, caudatum, nudum.

*Pedes* brachiati, unguiculati.

*Lin. Syst. Nat.* vol. 1. pt. 2. *Addend.*

## CHARACTER SPECIFICUS, &c.

SIREN corpore anguilliformi, branchiis ramosis.

SIREN LACERTINA.

*Amœn. Acad.* vol. 7. p. 311.

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Sirenem a reliquis animalibus adeo eminenter distinxit Natura, forma ambigua, et dubiis characteribus, ut celeberrimus LINNÆUS novum illi Amphibiorum ordinem nomine *Meantes* instituerit; qui tamen novus ordo non inter alia Amphibia in Systemate Naturæ invenitur, sed in nota ad finem partis secundæ tomi primi istius operis existat.

Genus cui Siren affinitate summa conjungi videtur, est genus *Lacerta*: lacertæ enim larvam valde repræsentat, et dubitant nonnulli an talis revera sit nec ne: characteres tamen omnes videntur esse animalis perfecti et adulti, nec hætenus visa est Siren in alia aliqua forma statuque. Pedes tantum duos habet, sine ullis pedum posteriorum vestigiis; illosque unguibus munitos, cum larvarum omnium lacertarum, hætenus cognitatarum, pedes sunt, (lingua LINNÆANA) mutici, sive unguibus

unguibus destituti. Os dentium parvulorum seriebus pluribus munitur.

Singulare hoc animal Americam Septentrionalem inhabitat, et in Carolina Australi præcipue invenitur, in locis uliginosis et aquosis minime infrequis, sub aqua plerumque degens, interdum vero in terram progrediens. Vocem habet stridulam, sive cantillantem, quam ob causam a LINNÆO nomine Sirenis distinguitur.

A Domino GARDEN, medico in Carolina per multos annos celeberrimo, primo detectum fuit descriptumque; qui etiam specimina nonnulla ad LINNÆUM misit. LINNÆUS in epistola sua ad Dominum GARDEN, de Sirene, affirmat nullum aliud unquam animal se adeo torfisse, nec aliud se plus velle, quam veram istius naturam optime callere. Non silendum est Sirenem in terram modica vi jactatam, in partes tres vel quatuor dissilire, quod aliquibus etiam serpentibus evenit.

In Actorum Anglicorum volumine quinquagesimo sexto describitur Siren a Domino ELLIS, qui etiam figuram addidit, quæ adeo ad normam animal exprimit, ut potius visum sit eam ipsam imitari, quam novam, diverso situ, effingere. Summam Sirenis larvæ lacertæ similitudinem demonstrat triplex branchiarum ramosarum utrinque in collo par, ut fit in larva lacertæ vulgaris aquaticæ. Species lacertæ cui Siren maxime videtur affinis, est lacerta a LINNÆO *Teguixin* nominata, Ad longitudinem fere duorum pedum crescit Siren.





*Linnæus, Naturhistorisk Museum, Lund 1799. For. Skildr. Svald. 1879. 82. Rönnerström.*

THE  
S I R E N.



GENERIC CHARACTER.

*Body* two-footed, tailed, naked.

*Feet* brachiate (*i. e.* placed in the manner of arms), and furnished with claws.

SPECIFIC CHARACTER.

SIREN with an eel-shaped body, and ramified branchiæ, or respiratory organs.

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The Siren stands eminently distinguished in the list of animals by the ambiguity of its characters, which are such as to have induced the great LINNÆUS to institute for it a new order of Amphibia, under the title of *Meantes*; an order however which does not stand amongst the Amphibia in the *Systema Naturæ*, but is mentioned in a note at the end of the second part of Vol. I. of that work.

The genus with which the Siren has evidently the greatest possible affinity, is that of *Lacerta* or Lizard. It even very much resembles the larva, or first state of a lacerta; and it is still doubtful whether it may not really be such; but it has never been observed in any other state, and it has always two feet only, without any appearance of a hind-pair. It likewise has all the characters of an animal in its complete state; the feet in particular, are armed with claws, whereas the larvæ of all the lacertæ are without claws, or in the LINNÆAN phrase, *digitis muticis*. The mouth has several rows of smallish teeth.

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This most singular animal is a native of North America, and the part where it has principally been found is the province of South Carolina, where it is not uncommon in muddy and swampy places, living generally under water, but sometimes appearing on land. It has a sort of squeaking or singing voice, for which reason LINNÆUS has applied to it the name of Siren.

It was first discovered by the ingenious Dr. GARDEN, who resided long in South Carolina, and who sent an account of the animal, accompanied with specimens, to LINNÆUS. LINNÆUS in his letter to Dr. GARDEN on this subject, declares that nothing had ever exercised his thoughts so much, nor was there any thing he so much desired to know as the real nature of this extraordinary creature. It is remarkable that the Siren, when thrown on the ground with a degree of violence, breaks in three or four pieces; in which particular it resembles some of the serpent tribe.

In the fifty-sixth Volume of the Philosophical Transactions is an account of the Siren by the late Mr. ELLIS, illustrated by a figure which so very accurately expresses the animal, that we have not scrupled to copy that figure, rather than to give a new one in a different posture. What causes this animal to approach very nearly to the appearance of the larva of a lacerta, is, that it is furnished on each side the neck, with three pair of ramified branchiæ, in the same manner as the larva of the common water-newt. The species of lacerta to which it seems most allied is the Lacerta Teguixin of LINNÆUS. It grows to the length of nearly two feet.